

Esteemed and Honored Ladies and Gentlemen,

My name is Steve Boyd and I am a 63 year old roofing contractor from Albany. This is the first time in my life that I feel compelled to speak out regarding a piece of legislation. I have never thought that my voice was as important as it is now.

I am here in opposition of HB2190, the bill to effectively eliminate all social gaming establishments in Oregon. I have come here because it is very apparent that there is a great lack of understanding in the legislature about the nature of these establishments and the game of poker itself.

I first learned poker with my family where we enjoyed many fun hours of family time playing "penny ante" games. Those times are cherished memories of people now gone. I learned many lifelong lessons, things like patience, honesty, attentiveness, and personality recognition. I became a better person because of those totally social interactions with my family and close friends. I went on to use some of those lessons to become an accomplished junior chess player. There was a time when I thought that chess was the most cerebral and difficult game in the world, that is until I really delved deeper into poker. I came to realize that poker is much more challenging and difficult due to the complexity of the various facets being blended into one game. I can stand before you now with the certainty that poker is by far more complex and difficult than chess. It is not a "gambling" game or a game merely of chance but a complex mixture of math, personality, position, and bankroll management. If you are like most average people who have never spent time really looking into the game you can never fully appreciate the true game of poker. It is a game where skill can be developed to a very high level and there is no end to the things you can learn as the game is alive and always evolving with different trends and nuances.

My main concern today is the very heavy handed and arbitrary way HB2190 treats the game and the environment I have come to love. It has seldom been effective to outlaw pastimes that most people deem as non-criminal. The best example is prohibition in the 20's. That debacle only drove the drinking underground and created rich organized crime figures that are a problem to this day. Whenever people see a law as unjust it is circumvented to the detriment and danger of society. The implementation of this bill will create the very environment that some misguided legislators believe exist now. The game will be driven

underground in seedy uncontrolled places that create a nuisance and danger to our friends and neighbors. The other unintended result is that it will deprive many law abiding people who love the social aspects of the game of the opportunity to enjoy the atmosphere they want. Poker has always been mostly a social game just as bridge, pinochle, and other card games. Even in the old west the cowboys would gather around the table to relax and talk about their day while enjoying an activity. They didn't play so much to win money as to share the comradery and friendship by doing something that allowed them to share anything they wanted.

Just like those old west cowboys, I came to the game for those vary reasons. I was recently separated from my wife and I was lonely. I craved some human interaction and a friend invited me to play poker at our local card room. I had no idea how much that invitation would change my life. I quickly realized that there were all manner of people there and that there was an opportunity to find friends and enjoy the poker at the same time. The mix of people was business owners, government workers, retired people, average working people, and students. I was very blessed and in the following two years I formed many friendships. I particularly found three who would become three of the best friends of my entire life. The process of playing poker allowed me the opportunity to evaluate people and their personalities so that I could choose to pursue friendships with those I liked. I never would have met these important people in my life had there been no poker room.

I am not the exception in this regard. I think if you ask any players you will find the same stories. One couple comes immediately to mind. They are a retired couple in their 80's. He was a marine and an air traffic controller and she a housewife. They drive from Salem to Albany 3-5 times per week to have dinner, play poker, and socialize with people. They are very Christian people and feel safe and happy in our card room because there is no drinking, smoking or cussing allowed. Poker is a shared hobby that both enjoy immencely and it may be the only outside socialization that they have. Even though she has leukemia and must take chemo pills they come together to share the respect and friendships they have formed almost every night. They can do that because it is inexpensive and within driving range for them. Poker tournaments have fixed costs and there is no risk beyond the nominal buy in that is known before the start of the game. The house takes no part of the player fees and only collects a small usage fee or membership fee that

defrays the cost of the facility. There is no house rake and all of the entrance money is awarded to the players at the end of play. If you take away these rooms what will these people and many others like them do? It's not fair to just deprive our seniors of this simple pleasure.

I find it very offensive and disingenuous that our State can support and encourage people to squander their money on the lottery machines that are programmed to take citizens money but want to eliminate local social gaming establishments. These legal gambling machines ruin families and encourage gambling that has nothing to do with skill. At least poker gives people a fair chance and has elements of skill and no organization to promote or support. Anyone who has critical thinking ability should be able to recognize that poker is a game of skill with many levels. It should not be lumped in with games that have a house advantage like slots, blackjack, and craps. In poker everyone has the same chance and the house is not taking money from them as it does with all other casino games.

In closing I would like to make a plea for you to remain open minded. Just as you hope for the voters and constituents to be educated about the issues before they vote, I encourage you to be educated about poker. I doubt that there are many of you who have ever spent much time in one of the local poker rooms. Unless you have done so you will be voting on this bill based on hearsay, stigma, and misinformation provided by misguided individuals and large outside interests. Please don't allow yourselves to make judgements without better understanding of our poker community. If you do you will play right into the hands of out of State interests and large Las Vegas corporations that greedily take all the money they can. Thank you for your time and consideration of this matter that is very important to a lot of honest hardworking people who just want a safe and friendly place to socialize and enjoy their game. Perhaps there should be a committee to find a solution to whatever problems are concerning to the legislature so that poker can be legally played and enjoyed without breaking any laws.

If you have any questions or concerns I would be happy to help clarify and find good solutions for this issue.

Sincerely,
